

**The Double Reed Project:**  
**Recruitment, Instruction, and Retainment of**  
**Double Reed Instrumentalists at the 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Level**

Arts Honors Undergraduate Thesis

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to better understand how double reed instrumentalists are recruited, instructed, and retained within the scheme of public-school instrumental music programs. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with high school band directors. These directors were individuals who worked at schools with successful double reed programs within their overall band programs. Participants described the structure of their programs and individual approaches to double reed recruitment, instruction, and retainment. Interview data suggests that a number of factors influenced success among these programs including private lessons, the personality of the double reed players, and teacher encouragement and comfortability with double reed instruments. Interviews also revealed challenges that educators face such as knowledge of instrument specific pedagogy, bassoon and oboe reeds, and the nature of wind band repertoire, especially with respect to the bassoon.

## **Introduction**

As integral parts of the modern-day symphony orchestra and wind ensemble, the bassoon and oboe are well known by professional musicians and music educators alike. These instruments have been part of standard instrumentation in orchestral ensembles since the 16<sup>th</sup> century and more recently in the modern wind band. The standard double reed section in professional orchestras and wind bands typically consists of two to four bassoonists, with one bassoonist who will double on contrabassoon when the instrument is called for, and two to three oboists, with one oboist doubling the English Horn as needed (Garofalo & Whaley, 1976; Reed, 1962). Before these musicians reach the highest tier of orchestral and wind ensemble performance, they often receive extensive musical training. Across the United States, the curricula of traditional music programs in elementary, middle, and high schools are responsible for establishing much of the

framework for these musicians to be able to excel in their studies during their collegiate years and beyond. Despite this historically rich tradition, some secondary school band programs struggle with poor instrumentation, and that often means a lack of bassoons and oboes in the ensemble (Rogers, 1991)

In an effort to help music educators understand how they can best structure their programs in order to provide a growth oriented environment for double reed instrumentalists, I wanted to study what effective music educators are doing in order to recruit, instruct, and maintain thriving double reed programs. As such, I have conducted a qualitative study of ten high school band directors from across the state of Ohio who have been efficacious in the structuring and development of the double reed programs at their high schools. My primary goal is to identify individual practices relating to fitting instrumentalists, literature selection, and the development of personal double reed knowledge, which can then be used in the instruction of current and pre-service educators in classes and seminars in order to improve their teaching practices with regard to double reeds, and thereby have more successful and robust double reed programs at their own schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Within many middle and high school band programs across the nation, educators responsible for these ensembles frequently struggle with issues of instrumentation, particularly as they relate to the recruitment and instruction of oboists and bassoonists. As instruments, the oboe and bassoon pose specific challenges with regard to cost, access to quality instruction and reeds, and a variety of unique pedagogical issues that many can cause issues for educators. Among schools that succeed in having successful double reed programs, there is a large discrepancy among those

schools when compared to other schools that struggle to recruit, retain, and instruct double reed players.

### **Research Questions**

Two main questions guided the scope and information that would be sought throughout the course of this study. These questions were selected based upon the identified problems and the likelihood of the question to return viable data. They were:

1. How do successful high school teachers cultivate a vibrant program and develop the culture of a successful double reed program?
2. How do teachers develop personal pedagogy on oboe and bassoon and how do they help their students to develop pedagogically?

### **Reflexivity Statement**

I am a bassoonist and pre-service educator in the final year of my undergraduate degree to become a licensed music educator. Growing up in southwest Ohio, I was ignorant in my thinking that the majority of music education programs had the same access to instruments and teachers that I was so fortunate to have. Within my school district, there was a strong sense of both community and administrative support for the arts which led to an abundance of musical opportunities, both during and outside of the school day.

My first experience with the bassoon was in October of 2011 when the freshman band class I was in was left without a bassoonist and my teacher was seeking someone to fill that role. At the time, I was playing clarinet and somewhat bored, so the opportunity to switch instruments jumped out to me as something new and exciting. The bassoon proved to be the challenge that I needed and provided me with a new level of engagement beyond what I was currently

experiencing. This moment served as a catalyst for the rest of my life– my enjoyment from playing the bassoon, and the high quality of education that I received from my teachers, resulted in a passion for music that inspired me to “pass it on” and elect to study music education in college.

Soon after I began my studies at Ohio State, I took notice of the large discrepancies I was seeing among programs, even those with similar levels of resources and support. What I found in my observations of programs from around central Ohio was that equal access to double reed instruments was simply not a possibility at many schools in the area, especially those in more rural locations. While I know that there are a variety of factors that inhibit educators and schools from recruiting and instructing double reed instrumentalists, I have made it my mission to make these instruments as accessible and approachable as possible for students and teachers alike.

## **Background**

Research on double reed recruitment, instruction, and retention is limited with regard to this specific instrument sub-category. However, significant research has been done on factors relating to band recruitment and retention as a whole. Studies such as the one done by Cutietta and McAllister (1997) observed the effect of different personality traits on students’ likelihood to begin and continue with instrumental ensembles, as well as the instrument family they were mostly likely to choose based upon those personality traits. A separate study, Fortney, Boyle, and DeCarbo (1993) examined the role that gender stereotypes, instrumental timbre, and various social influences played when middle school band students were selecting an instrument. They found that stereotypes and timbre played primary roles in instrument selection, but also that biases of family members and friends towards certain instruments, and familiarity with instruments based upon social connections played a large role. These findings were reinforced

by those of Cramer, Million, and Perreault (2002) who also investigated the effect that gender stereotypes had on students' likelihood to pick and then stay with an instrument based on those stereotypes and societal perception of gender norms. The influence of gender stereotypes on instrumental selection as well as the influence of parents and other social factors was further corroborated by Chen and Howard (2004). Additional studies by Corenblum and Marshall (1998) looked at a variety of factors including socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and various student support structures that impacted likelihood of students to continue studying music throughout high school and beyond.

Socio-economic status and academic achievement in particular played a role in recruitment and retainment success in a number of other research studies. Young (1971), studied factors that could predict musical attainment in elementary beginning instrumental students, it was found that the "relationship of intelligence and academic achievement to musical attainment, while initially higher, becomes noticeably less with additional years of music study."

Socioeconomic status, self-concept in music, reading achievement, math achievement, and scholastic ability were primary factors that best predicted retention rates in Klinedinst (1991). In analyzing data from schools in exclusively urban areas, Kinney (2008) found that higher academically achieving students and those from two parent/guardian homes were more likely to begin and continue in band. Similarly, Albert (2006) specifically studied schools in areas of low socio-economic status and found that factors such as culturally relevant ensembles and student involvement in classroom and ensemble processes helped to bolster recruitment and retention rates.

Personality types and traits also played a role in a substantial number of studies. In Payne's (2014) research and his findings that instrumental timbre preferences in students related

to personality traits such as introversion/extraversion, double reed instruments were an included subcategory, but due to a small sample size provided a lack of data that caused findings as they relate specifically to double reeds to be deemed insignificant. In earlier studies, personality characteristics in musicians such as assertiveness were investigated in Sample and Hotchkiss (1971), and that study found that artistic sensitivity tended to correlate with lower emotional stability. In a similar vein, personality traits of classical musicians was studied by Builione and Lipton (1983), in a study they themselves considered preliminary and exploratory, examining common personality traits among instrumental subgroups within the orchestra. Bell and Creswell (1984) “suggested that some personality characteristics predisposed individuals to pursue instrumental- performance studies, whilst others reflected habitual performance on different types of musical instrument”. More recently, Torrance and Bugos (2017) studied personality at a more macro level, investigating personality type influence on an individual’s decision to choose an instrumental ensemble or vocal ensemble. They found extroverted individuals were more likely to become vocalists or percussionists, but other findings were more limited in scope.

With regard to research that specifically focuses on double reed instruments and instrumentalists, the majority of the literature published has been written by professors of bassoon and oboe, who provide mostly anecdotal experiences. In an article written to provide advice on starting young bassoonists, Ewell (2000) wrote that, “A student with independent nature should be given preference” when selecting students to play the instrument. From an oboists perspectives, Prodan (1995) wrote that student and parent enthusiasm were essential when selecting a new oboe student as well as a strong self-image and persistence. Beyond articles and entries like these, however, actual qualitative and quantitative studies centered around double reed instruments are few and far between.

Clearly, additional research is needed in this area. From my personal experience, the students that play double reed instruments often struggle without appropriate guidance and support from their teachers. Research into this area will serve fellow scholars and educators in the field in order to better understand how these programs can be bolstered, and how educational practices can be better improved in the future.

## **Method**

Qualitative research methods were selected for this study in order to generate data that was rich in detail and that would contain a high degree of embedded context. Semi-structured teacher interviews were the primary method of data collection. In this study I sought to analyze high school band programs with double reed programs that would be considered successful. As such, I chose to define a successful double reed program as one in which there are at least two bassoonists and two oboists in the high school band program. With parameters established, a list of interview questions was created and the study was evaluated and approved through the IRB.

In reviewing the programs of high schools from across Ohio, educators were initially contacted by email if their program met the standards of this study. 27 educators were contacted, and 10 responses were received. Once an educator confirmed interest, a time was established for a site visit and an interview. Interviews were conducted based upon a script of interview questions created by the researcher and were anonymous and confidential, with any identifying information of the participants or employers removed from the published study. Prior to the interview, participants acknowledged their voluntary participation, consented to an audio recording of the interview, and were informed that they were free to opt out of the interview at any time during the process. Interviews were then conducted over the course of about 30 minutes.



Upon completion of the interview, audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher. Following the completion of all transcriptions, the interviews were then analyzed for common ideas and emerging themes as they related to the main research questions. Emergent themes were extrapolated from quotes and data collected during interviews and from transcripts, and in order to be included within the study, a theme required consensus from at minimum fifty percent of the participants interviewed. Other relevant information gleaned from these interviews was also identified and analyzed within the context of the researchers' personal knowledge and experience.

## **Findings**

### **Research Question 1: How do successful high school teachers cultivate a vibrant program and develop the culture of a thriving double reed program?**

In addressing the first research question, three themes emerged from analysis: (a) private lessons, (b) educator enthusiasm, encouragement, and comfortability, and (c) the unique personality traits of double reed players. The first theme, *private lessons*, was a general idea referenced at least once by each of the participants that were interviewed. Educators tended to see private lessons as a driving force for overall success of their students. In one interview, reflecting upon the largest factor that influenced double reed success at the high school level, one of the participants was adamant in their response to this question:

“Private lessons [are the most important factor]. I think they have to have it. [They are] such unique and specialty instruments. And it's, compared to all the others, what the kids have to do that play those instruments is so far removed from what any of the other woodwinds or brass players have to do.” (interview, October 4, 2018)

Of these teachers, the majority were not individuals with extensive experience on double reeds. They relied upon the private teachers of their students to help provide quality reeds, answer pedagogy questions for both the students, themselves, and most importantly, to teach students how to play their instruments. Of the participants interviewed, only one was an oboe player with extensive performance experience, and one other had significant experience with oboe during their student teaching. None of the participants had extensive experience on the bassoon. Otherwise, the extent of these teachers' experience with double reeds was limited to double reed pedagogy classes in college, professional development seminars, and their experiences with their double reed playing students.

The second theme, *educator enthusiasm, encouragement, and comfortability*, relates specifically to how educators address double reed instruments and students when recruiting and giving instruction. A common idea among the majority of the participants that were interviewed was that double reed instrumentalists needed additional support from their teachers, family, and friends, especially when starting or switching to a double reed instrument. Their reasoning for this being that oftentimes double reed instruments have a steeper learning curve, and students often don't see immediate success or gratification for their efforts. As such, members of the students' immediate "community" are needed to support and bolster the student, initially and even throughout their career as a double reed player, to help encourage them to continue to play and develop further on their instrument.

Regarding their personal efforts to support their students, one participant explained:

"I do think that I've always been extra encouraging to double reed players, I think that they're way easier to get discouraged, and they feel way more exposed and put out there. Especially as they get older and the literature calls for it. They need more encouragement

than the average child if you want them to stick with it... because they're just stuck out there, and it doesn't always sound good. And to be honest, it really doesn't sound good for a long time." (interview, November 8, 2018)

Another participant, referencing their recruiting process for double reeds, exclaimed that:

"You have to be excited about it. You have to show them that it's a good thing. You have to be positive about it... if you're smiling, the kids will smile no matter what you're selling. It's the same thing with oboes and bassoons, and I love playing those instruments so for me it's easy to be excited!" (interview, November 1, 2018)

The third theme, *the unique personality traits of double reed players*, addresses both the type of student that teachers tend to look for when recruiting and also the type of student these players tend to become later on in their high school careers and beyond. In the recruiting processes of many of these educators, students who are noticeably intelligent and driven become prime candidates to play double reed instruments. Some of the teachers went so far as to pull transcripts and grades for students interested in playing the bassoon or oboe in order to evaluate if they might be an appropriate fit. Many of the participants noted that a highly driven student is more likely to be successful, especially when switching to a double reed from another instrument, due to the extra practice time and work required for that student to "catch up" with his or her peers after switching.

Students also tended to be a little different than their peers, or "quirky", as one participant recounted when speaking on the personality of his double reed players:

"I don't want to say quirkiness... But they've got to be a little quirky because they've got to want to work harder than the rest of the kids at that time. And they've got to be pretty

outgoing to some degree. But yeah, like they have to be willing to do more than most kids just because they're going to have to spend more time either getting caught up or working to begin with." (interview, January 17, 2019)

Another participant described their high school double reed players in a similar way:

"Oboists I always tend to equate personality traits to the book readers, the kids that are possibly more introverted that tend to be very well read and maybe above their grade level. Same thing with bassoon. Again, it's not so much that they're not outgoing, but they tend to be the ones that are more quiet and reserved. Maybe a little socially odd, but still really capable, and I think they tend to be socially odd not in a bad way, but they're so mature for their age it's hard for them to relate to their peers." (interview, November 1, 2018)

These claims tended to be corroborated by their peers in the other interviews that were conducted. Overall, there were clearly defined trends in personality amongst the double reed players taught by these participants with leanings towards students who were: independent, intelligent, driven, and occasionally what could be considered "socially odd" or "quirky".

### **Research Question 2: How do teachers develop personal pedagogy on oboe and bassoon and how do they help their students to develop pedagogically?**

In addressing this second research question, three themes emerged from analysis: (a) lacking educator knowledge of reeds, (b) inadequate collegiate double reeds methods courses, and (c) inconsistency of wind band literature for double reed instrument parts. For the first of these themes, *lacking educator knowledge of reeds*, the majority of the participants noted their general level of comfortability with the instruments as a whole was low, but with the reeds specifically

the general comfort level was even lower. Many educators stated that they relied upon the student and the student's private teacher (if the student was in lessons) to have a reed that was playable for class. Beyond that, reeds tended to be discussed with general apprehension and the majority of the participants said they would not feel comfortable making any sort of alterations to a reed, or in some cases, simply judging if a reed was "good" or not.

The educators interviewed often expressed frustration about dealing with reeds, both because of students not having quality reeds, and their personal struggle with knowing what makes a reed "good":

"The reed thing is just a constant, the quality reed issue is just such a huge problem.

Because if they're not in lessons, they're probably buying them from a store, and we all know how that goes. So that's the biggest thing probably? From a non-technique, non-pedagogy standpoint. The, 'You need to have a good reed thing,' is just a constant."

(interview, January 17, 2019)

In a separate instance, at the end of the interview, a question was posed by a participant who seemed to be exasperated from dealing with "the reed issue": "Who makes a good store-bought reed? Is the answer no one?" (interview, November 8, 2018)

The exception to this theme were the two participants who had prior experience working with double reeds; one was and is an oboe player who still performs and teaches lesson, the other had their student teaching experience with a mentor who was an oboist and respected double reed pedagogue. These two individuals, however, still noted that reeds were a general problem amongst double reed instrumentalists and acknowledged the plight that many of their colleagues faced. Both expressed gratitude for the working knowledge of double reeds, and specifically the

reeds, that they did have. When asked what the biggest challenge that young double reed players faced, one of these individuals stated:

“It’s definitely the reeds. And I know this because we have two middle schools, and so I make the reeds for all of the kids [I see], but not the kids on the other side of town that I don’t see everyday, I can’t make their reeds until they get to high school. Because machine scraped reeds are thinner, they change a lot more and they aren’t very good. But I can’t give them one of my hand scraped reeds because if the weather changes and all of a sudden it loses its crow, I won’t see them for four days and they wouldn’t be able to play until I could see it and adjust it for them.” (interview, October 11, 2018)

*Application of collegiate double reeds methods courses in the field* was the second theme to arise within this research question. Across the board, the participants were quick to point out that while they felt unprepared by their college courses to teach double reed students, in many cases it was not the fault of their course instructors that these classes were unable to adequately prepare pre-service music educators. Rather, the issues lied primarily in the overall structure of method courses at the institutions the participants attended, the wide breath of information that would need to be covered by these classes in a short period of time in order to be considered “comprehensive”, and a “use it or lose it” struggle that educators often found themselves in at their first job. Simply put, because of their dissimilar nature when compared to other instruments, even woodwinds such as the clarinet or saxophone, eight weeks (in many cases) is insufficient time for a pre-service educator to become familiar enough with a double reed instrument to feel comfortable and competent in teaching that instrument once licensed and in the profession.

When asked to provide input on their experience with their methods courses and what they might change, if they were able to structure the course, one participant expressed:

“I think I would prefer in woodwind method classes to move away from getting directors to become proficient in an instrument, because they’re going to forget that if they don’t continue to play it, is to focus on embouchure creation, how to adjust for intonation when it isn’t good, and how to work to get an open and warm tone. I think those concepts will last and stay with the director longer, and it’s easy to look up a fingering, but a computer isn’t going to produce great sound. So, I wish the focus was more on creating a great fundamental sound, and if you want to go further that’s great...” (interview, May 31, 2018)

Other participants mirrored this point of view with statements such as: “It seems like [double reed pedagogy] is one of those things that if you don’t use it you lose it,” (interview, November 1, 2018) and, “Double reeds, no offense, but especially at a smaller school and maybe as teacher right out of college... Are they necessary to be successful? Not entirely.” (interview, October 4, 2018)

Similar sentiments with regard to their first job were expressed by multiple parties, which in almost all cases was in a more rural school district with more limited funding and resources. As such, when these individuals were first-year teachers, they relied primarily upon their own knowledge of instruments and pedagogy when teaching. Some noted that because double reeds were not essential to have a successful program at those more rural schools, they opted to avoid them because of a lack of funding and quality instruments. Additionally, many participants were not comfortable enough with the instruments from a pedagogical standpoint in order to feel as if

they could set a student up for true success and didn't want the student to struggle on a double reed instrument without proper instruction.

The final theme to emerge from the exploration of this research question was the *inconsistency of wind band literature for double reed instrument parts*. In the interview, participants were asked about their opinions regarding wind band literature parts for double reed instruments at the beginning band, middle school, and high school level and the transitions between those levels. For the most part, participants had more concerns with the way in which bassoon parts were written, with fewer qualms about oboe parts. Regarding oboe parts, most participants saw the tendency for oboe parts to double or closely align with flute parts as a non-issue. They felt that the oboe was appropriately treated as a solo instrument and that the progression between increasing difficulties of literature was mostly appropriate for what those students needed to experience and develop. One participant did express some dissatisfaction that the oboes were not more closely aligned with the clarinets, at least in easier repertoire, as they felt that would be of more benefit from a timbral standpoint.

Bassoon parts in wind band repertoire were where more inconsistencies and disagreements with compositional decisions tended to emerge among the participants. In multiple instances, individuals expressed concern that the initial doubling of the bassoon with low brass instruments in beginning band and middle school did not prepare these instrumentalists for the more challenging and soloistic nature of bassoon parts in high school, especially within grade 5 and 6 literature. One participant poignantly addressed this idea when they stated: "[With] the bassoons it feels like sometimes they're suddenly expected to be woodwinds, and they weren't for a long time." (interview, November 8, 2018)

Building upon this, another participant shared the following:



“I would rather the bassoon be tied to the clarinet section. To be completely honest I think that’s a much better blend for it. Once you hit the jump to high school the bassoon parts can essentially become miniature clarinet parts. And you just see black all over the page, like what is that double barred note because they’re used to ‘Mr. Whole Note Takes A Walk’ in the low brass section. So, I really wish [lower level] bassoon parts were written more along the lines of like alto sax or clarinet parts.” (interview, January 17, 2019)

For the majority of participants though, they were unsure of how to address and fix these issues. When asked about potentially rewriting parts, lack of time and a desire to follow the composers scoring were presented as barriers to altering parts to better suit the bassoonists in their ensembles.

### **Additional Findings**

In addition to the specific questions that were researched, other findings came to light throughout the course of these participant interviews. While many of these findings were not pervasive enough amongst the participants to justify recognition as a theme, they are notable in the sense that they bring to light potential issues and questions that could be researched further in the future. The ways in which high schools handled marching band with double reed players was one such finding that differed more than anticipated among the participants interviewed. Of note, two of the participants interviewed had marching bands that required participation from all students in the band program and met during the school day, meaning double reed players were not on their primary instruments in class until “concert band season”. Among the rest of the participants, each had varying preferences with regard to the instruments that those double reed students played (if they elected to do marching band). The tendency leaned towards students

performing on whatever instrument they switched from, but in other cases, participants didn't care what instrument their double reed students marched with students performing on battery percussion, sousaphone, saxophone, and mellophone among others. Of particular note though was that in the schools in which marching band was an elective, anecdotally, the vast majority of double reed players still elected to participate. In discussing their personal stance on marching band with double reed players, one participant stated:

“A lot of people think double reed players shouldn't play other instruments to be in marching band. But I think marching band is very, very important for the development of the musicians. I think my best oboe kids have been kids who've played other instruments in marching band... I'm a big proponent of helping kids go back and forth, just because I think it's good for kids. But I also, on the flipside, there's a lot of programs around here, and I won't mention any, that say that the kid has to be in marching band in order to be in band, and I don't think that's fair to the double reed players. I think if they want to focus on that, then they should be allowed to do that as well.” (interview, October 11, 2018)

Another idea that emerged in two of the interviews that were conducted was the tendency for a double reed section to be a deciding factor in the repertoire performed by an ensemble. One participant spoke on their conversations with colleagues regarding choosing repertoire of an appropriate difficulty level for their respective ensembles:

“More than one person has told me that their double reed section can be the deciding factor of whether they go in [OMEA] AA or A to large group [contest]. Because a lot of the difference from A to AA literature is simply either the double reed parts within the choir, the woodwind choir being more necessary, or solos. You know, there's not a ton of oboe or bassoon solos in A stuff compared to AA stuff.” (interview, January 17, 2019)

The other participant noted a similar decision made when deciding between OMEA B and A level repertoire. For both of these individuals, the capabilities of their double reed sections heavily influence the repertoire they are able to perform and the level at which they are able to compete. Among the rest of the individuals who participated in the study, they did note that their double reed sections played a role in their literature selection but did not indicate that the double reeds were a deciding factor for them.

One final idea that was addressed by the participant whose primary instrument was oboe was that of method books as they relate to the bassoon and oboe. They noted that for both of these instruments, the key of Bb was not the ideal key in which to first introduce notes. Eb on the bassoon and F on the oboe are both notes that require a “forked” fingering, in which alternating fingers are placed on the tone holes to produce the pitch, and these notes can sometimes be challenging for beginning players. In instances where beginning double reed instrumentalists are attempting to learn these notes in a heterogeneous setting, that can make things especially difficult for the students and for the teachers. Their recommendation was to utilize method books specifically catered to beginning double reed players and to provide a homogeneous setting for these beginners as often as possible to help curtail this issue.

## **Implications**

In reflecting upon the research questions and themes that emerged from the interviews that were conducted during the course of the study, significant progress has been made in analyzing the best practices in double reed recruitment, instruction, and retention. The results, themes, and data gathered provide important information from which: (a) educators in the field can examine their current practices to compare and contrast them with those seen and examined in this study and (b) other scholars can begin to extrapolate upon in their own research of best practice as it relates

to double reeds instruments and instrumentalists. While there is still more work to be done in this area, the emergent themes and concepts brought to light by this study serve as a strong foundation for a topic that is currently underrepresented in the field of music education research.

Returning to research question one and the themes contained within, it is unsurprising that private lessons serve as a primary catalyst for double reed success within a program. The nature of double reed instruments essentially necessitates that students study with an experienced pedagogue, or otherwise risk incorrectly learning essential facets of the instruments such as: how to produce a good tone, how to play with correct posture and weight distribution, and how to properly maintain and care for the instrument and a reed (not to mention, having a good reed in general). While many of the personality types that would be good fits for a double reed instrument could learn and study the instrument independently with a degree of success, the necessity of lessons cannot be understated. The issue then lies in accessibility, which is a far greater issue, and one that is significantly more difficult to address. This is especially true in areas which are impoverished and lack the necessary resources and teachers for these double reed students.

The personalities contained within a double reed program are also conducive to the program's success, including both the educator and the instrumentalists. Anecdotally, personal drive and independence are two of the most important factors to successfully learning a double reed instrument. It often seems to happen that intelligence is correlated with, or sometimes mistaken for, these two attributes. While a quick learner may initially excel at the bassoon and oboe, frequent plateaus are inevitable with these instruments, and students must be willing to push themselves past these plateaus in order to succeed. Retention rates suffer when a student without passion or drive for these instruments is chosen to play them, because inevitably when

they do begin to struggle with a certain skill, these students will sometimes lack sufficient motivation to push through the difficulties and continue pursuing the instrument. When recruiting students, they must first and foremost have a degree of independence, personal drive, and passion for the bassoon or oboe – intelligence should be a secondary consideration. And with the bassoon and oboe having established reputations of being quirky and unique instruments, it often seems that students who are somewhat “quirky” find themselves well suited to the instruments.

For the educator, it is essential to be enthusiastic about double reeds in order to see success in students. This applies for all ages of double reed players. When educators express high levels of apprehension when working with double reed instruments and instrumentalists, students can mistake that apprehension as being directed towards them. While apprehension and unease are understandable on the part of an educator unexperienced in double reeds, the teacher must express a willingness to learn *with* the students and to take the process in stride. Double reed players will often need a little bit more encouragement and reassurance in both classroom and individual contexts, especially when they find themselves on exposed soloistic lines. Students should be held to the same standard as the rest of the ensemble, however, “bad reed days” are an inevitable part of the double reed experience and it can take time and practice for an educator to know the difference between a “bad reed day” and an unprepared student.

Pedagogy and pedagogical practices were the central focus of the second research question, and the findings of this study as they relate to that question indicate that educator knowledge of double reed instruments and pedagogy is lacking. This is of no particular fault to the educators themselves, it is more so an inherent challenge of double reed instruments and the difficulty that educator preparation programs face to sufficiently prepare pre-service service

educators. The extent of many of these participants' experience with double reeds was one quarter or half of a semester on bassoon and one on oboe. This is arguably not enough time to become somewhat comfortable playing the instrument, let alone learn enough to be capable of successfully adjusting reeds or teaching students how to produce a proper tone. Reeds in particular seemed to present the largest challenge to the participants, especially when they had a student who was not in private lessons. The majority of store-bought reeds often produce less than desirable tone and range and can make playing more difficult than it needs to be for students. Multiple participants expressed their frustration with helping their students to find good reeds and with not knowing what differentiated a good reed from a bad one, other than students simply being able to successfully play or not on a given reed.

Educators also seemed to suffer from a "use it or lose it" situation in which their first jobs out of college were in rural areas, sometimes in districts that didn't even have the funding available to purchase a bassoon or an oboe. Given the difficulty that comes with the first few years of teaching, it's unsurprising that these individuals avoided having bassoonists or oboists if they could avoid it. As a result, any of the knowledge that they had gathered from their schooling wasn't put to use and tended to fade over time. The location of these rural schools also presented issues stemming from the fact that often private double reed teachers weren't as accessible in these areas. Even if a student wanted to play the instrument and were able to afford lessons, in some cases the nearest lesson teacher could be upwards of an hour away.

The nature of wind band literature also poses pedagogical challenges, especially when it comes to bassoonists. Oboists generally seem to fit in with where they're scored, and their role doesn't extensively or dramatically change as they're progressing through the literature. Bassoonists, on the other hand, are initially juxtaposed with the low brass at the beginning levels,

and then somewhere in high school suddenly find themselves playing sixteenth note runs with the rest of the woodwinds. While there is no fine line that defines this transition, above a certain level of repertoire, the role of the bassoon tends to change and become more technical, soloistic, and exposed. This can cause issues both for the students and for their teachers if the students are unprepared for the transition. To some extent, this returns to the necessity of private lessons. Students need to have studied solo repertoire by the time they reach this transition in order to be prepared for it, because concert band music for the bassoon isn't scaled in a way that progresses linearly or logically, especially at the uppermost levels.

## **Recommendations**

Moving forward, it is important that educators and scholars alike acknowledge the importance of double reeds to modern-day musical ensembles, especially at the 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade level. While the scope and qualitative nature of this study makes it inherently limited in some regards, it serves as an important basis for future research that should occur in this area of study. Because of the nature of the bassoon and oboe (and by extension, the english horn) there are a number of accessibility issues that these instruments present, both from a cost prohibitive standpoint and also from access to pedagogy and pedagogues. Regardless, if we as music educators and scholars alike hope to provide a comprehensive educational experience for every child, then it is our responsibility to pursue solutions to the challenges that we face; both with double reeds and otherwise.

While the process of further developing double reed pedagogy and expanding our knowledge of double reed instruments and the individuals who play them is a process that will take time, there are immediate steps that can be taken in support of double reed music education. Double reed pedagogues should seek to provide further means with which to make double reed

pedagogy approachable and comprehensible for music educators with limited understandings of the bassoon and oboe. Especially with regard to reeds and reed making, while it is often ideal to have someone experienced handling and scraping reeds, some music educators find themselves without access to experienced individuals. As much as possible should be done to ensure that students have access to quality and working reeds.

Pre-service educators and educators in the field need to be willing to step outside of their comfort zones and pursue double reeds to the best of their ability. They need to be willing to educate themselves with available pedagogy and materials to the furthest extent possible for them. As has been previously mentioned, issues as they relate to accessibility present the largest hurdle in double reed education. But, if that barrier can be overcome or is a non-issue in a given school district, then educators should not hesitate to encourage students to play double reed instruments. Local colleges and universities can be a powerful resource for educators and double reed students. The internet can also provide a wealth of resources if one is looking in the right place. Taking into consideration the results of this study, educators in the field should also evaluate their recruiting processes, particularly with regard to double reeds, in order to ensure that the students they select will be a good fit for the instrument and vice versa.

At the collegiate level, music educator preparation programs should evaluate their double reed courses in order to ensure that relevant material is being covered and discussed. Emphasis within these classes should be helping pre-service educators prepare to set their future students up for success on these instruments and providing them with resources and materials to do so. While the pre-service educators should understand and be able to play the instruments at a basic level, this should not be the sole nor central purpose of these courses. Scholars at colleges and



universities around the country should also consider the further pursuit of double reed knowledge in their individual research.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to better understand how to teach double reed instrumentalists utilizing established pedagogy and best practices. In identifying and supporting the further development of these practices, this study will serve to bolster the field of music education and the individual students that we teach. It is my hope that further research will continue to be conducted in this area in order to provide even greater understandings of double reed instruments and the students that play them.

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